

LOVE POEMS

SECOND SERIES

REGINALD C. ROBBINS




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REGINALD C. ROBBINS

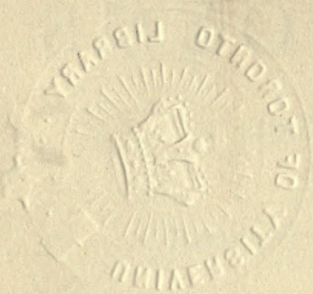


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PSALMS

PSALMS

I

I COME to thee, belovèd, not with a lie ;
But frankly, fairly, with confession full
Of old lost love behind this love for thee.
Sooth, I have lived, have suffer'd ; and know the need
Of continence in every dream of thee ;
Of fear and reverence in thine holy place
Beyond this tumult of delight in thee.
I have been through the fire, not all unscathed ;
And yet with prayer and praise would enter now
On a new martyrdom if but for thee.
Belovèd, thou wilt not blame that there hath been
Another's love. It serves to deepen thine.

LOVE POEMS

II

FOR I am as a soul prepared by years
Of fasting from the sight of promised lands
To enter in, not as a conqueror
But, as a lost life in the hand of God
The suddenly compassionate to turn
The famine and the fever of mine heart
To solemn splendor all unmerited.
Nay, I have learn'd religion and am come
But to obey behest of love's supreme
Commandment whatsoever may befall.
The desert lieth about me. But mine eyes
Have seen : and now I very well may die.

PSALMS

III

AND if not unto death but unto life
Thou leadest me to take possession, in
The name of the Most High, of heaven-on-earth;
If thou allowest that I may lay my life
Quick, stalwart at thy feet for service there;
Shall any blame be that I still have served
In darkness and in desperate dismay,
With face of heaven averted, some false god
That seem'd scarce false to mine idolatry?
There be who call such service unrepaid
The nobler. Ah, at worst I have not swerved
From worship; though the noblest were of thee.

LOVE POEMS

IV

AND thereby, that I come to thee with full
Experience of the powers that sway the heart
Within itself to live or yet to die ;
Therein that I have felt how soul alone
Determines life or death within itself,
Choosing between false gods and God Most High ;
Therefore were God Most High, as this my soul,
Self-comprehended in this love of thee ;
Which, losing lesser loves, finds them afresh
Transfigured and regenerate : as the gods
Have sanctioning and warranty but through
Thy God of Love Who comprehends them all.

PSALMS

V

THUS in the wisdom of the new delight
New worth is yielded to the former loss ;
And this enrapture hath about it still
The ancient tragedy. The beauty of it
Were blent with beauty of an Hell behind
Now lifted clean of Hell's sheer agony
And seen a foil for Heaven to heighten it.
The misery, the infinite dismay
Were then blameworthy in their own sad hour —
Not now. I turn to thee as free and pure
As any seraph. And thine angelhood
Thus wholly triumphs as the legions fall.

LOVE POEMS

VI

THE legions of the fiend within me then
Thus wholly serve and crown thee conqueror
Who art thyself new savior to my soul.
A justification of the ways of God
To man finds instance in mine heart to-day
Who wholly love thee, having wholly loved
And lost; and could not know thee thus with heart
Wholly subdued and chasten'd, all devout,
Save for the shame and sorrow that hath been.

Thy grace, belovèd ! if a moment's gleam
Of hope betray'd a spirit still unredeem'd !
'T were false. I hope not. I but stand and wait.

PSALMS

VII

YET is delay itself a misery ;
For I am mortal if my love is not.
And loss of opportunity to serve
Is loss of life all irremediable.
Lo ! I am creature, less than godhead, still ;
And need thy very presence, and thy power
Envisaging, to be as I would be
Seer and prophet of thy reign on earth.
The world is thine and I am of thy world
Indeed : but am such distant part in it !
Only my love, containing thee afar,
Enableth me to wait : though I must mourn.

LOVE POEMS

VIII

YEA, in each hour 'soever of my search
Through all things for the chance to serve thy will
(A search that falleth frustrate everywhere
Because, forsooth, I dare not pray thee yet
To grant command, to set the task ; but must
In secret worship lest thou turn from me !),
Findeth my spirit in the failure still
Thy best compassion and benignity !
For 'tis in terms of thee my love interprets
Or failure or success ; in name of thee
That I within myself have end and aim :
And am as one with thee though thou wouldst not.

PSALMS

IX

THEREFORE, since all of earth interprets thee
Unto my love ; and I in learning earth
Learn thee, searching thy scriptures with a faith
Increasing for the wisdom gain'd of thee ;
Therefore am I through every loneliest hour
Increasing hourly in the love of thee,
As in capacity (with heart enrapt
Of understanding of thy ways to men)
To pray to thee and preach the gospel of thee
Unto the nations ! — Who, that knew thee not
By vigil and by fasting and by searching
Thy wonderwork, might prophesy thee true ?

LOVE POEMS

X

AND so I go before thee among men
Undoubting, uttering of thee day by day
The day's best message : " I am he who cometh
" In name of Love, before the feet of her
" Love's angel of the miracle to men."
Though wastes be round about me and my fare
Be famine, my face perforce averted from thee
To speak with fearlessness my message to them,
Yet shall the path behind be blossoming ;
And fruitfulness unto the husbandman
Reward earth in thy footsteps. And mine eyes
Are forward set, assured that thus are thine.

PSALMS

XI

AND that I am fresh convert to thy faith
Disableth not from full apostleship
In the new light, new learning. Had I been
A sorry skeptic, cynic, stoic, till
Thy power possess'd me, what afflatus now
Could e'er compensate for the weakling soul ?
What heart of suffering were beneath these lips
To speak with understanding, not as one
Requiring authority for voice ?
Art thou not holier and thy prophet purer
That he hath pray'd in the temple whilst they scoff'd ;
And thou art proven divine beyond all gods ?

LOVE POEMS

XII

WHEREFORE in fine I pray thee (for the first
If not the last desire directed toward thee),
Accept this scripture of an earlier faith
Not dedicate to thee save as I now
Declare to thee : the Spirit that cult but miss'd
Find I concentrated in thy strength and mind.
Read in my book, belovèd, how, should thine heart
Prove unresponsive, must thy worshiper
Degenerate beneath contempt at last
And the mantle fall from the prophet lost in soul. —
I nothing hope. I nothing claim of thee.
I but avow, belovèd, my love is so.

PSALMS

XIII

PERCHANCE thou wilt assert thou needest nought
Of prophecy to help prepare thy way.
Thou findest all paths pleasant, hast enough
Of worshipers and wouldst not enter on
Crusade of saviorship for any soul ?
One more, one less ! His very need confess'd
For thee must seem unworthy in thy sight ?
His fear to fall must prove unfitness in him ?

I fear not. Only, if thou art the God
My faith envisioneth, thou wilt not wait
Eternally before thou takest on thee
The human way and sufferest for man.

LOVE POEMS

XIV

HOW high an office then of prophecy
Without assurance of the spoken word
Vouchsafed nor present vision in the flesh !
How proud a mantle ; when the very God
Withholdeth sign and doubteth of the way !
Not merely to announce to wondering men
The white love-miracle ; but all the while
To pray for truth of what the lips proclaim !
And never doubting, save to conquer doubt
And yield faith greater glory ! — If the God
Doubteth of saviorship, O love, behold
This more-than-man thy power hath raised to
praise thee !

PSALMS

XV

THOU wilt not misinterpret. I but mean,
No man, save for thy spirit to strengthen him
Within him by the love he beareth thee,
Might without desperate dismay indeed
Abide thine absence and thy silence still.
No word ; though I have prophesied aloud
Thy coming, now 't would seem so long ago !
And I must wait the fire to fall, though nought
Of light's least glimmering followeth on the prayer :
For all the faith of him thine oracle !
And mine heart scoffs me. Love, might a mere man
Endure between thy silence, and self-scorn ?

LOVE POEMS

XVI

Thou hast allow'd the leading and a light
Out of the silence ; and I fall afraid.
Unto my spirit hath thy still voice spoke
Enheartening ; and now I sink ashamed :
Who was thy poet aloud when thou wast dumb
Now speechless bow a coward's brow before thee.
Thou knowest not the low humanity
Thou stoopest thus to lift. One touch of mine
Would ruin divinity — e'en such as thee !
I flee before thee, scarce thy prophet now,
Though yet thy servant : seeking thus to save
Heart's miracle from turning common clay.

PSALMS

XVII

AND yet what service, thus to doubt of thee
Thine absolute godship though thy soul assume
The human way, and sufferest and dwellest
Among men that the earth may learn of thee ?
What saviorship were mine, to thwart in thee
The perfect sacrifice that most proclaims
Thy womanhood divine and shows thee, God,
As thou wouldst win and save a human soul ?
How despicable the doubt that though I were —
Ah, that I am ! — thy strength might ever fail !
I will accept the intimation ; pray
For power to endure as chosen of the Lord.

LOVE POEMS

XVIII

BELOVÈD, what vain presumption to pretend
Authentic oracle at last vouchsafed !
What phantasm of this fever-misted soul
To hear in the ears what yet the sense of man
Hath heard not, nay, and haply shall not hear !
I, overtask'd with watching, see the night
Suddenly open'd : and have but dream'd the dawn
As mine exhaustion dropt me where I lie !
Humbly I will arise, groping to greet
The world as thou hast made it ; starless, yea —
Though not with any dawn as I had dream'd ;
And humbly learn thee from thy stocks and stones.

PSALMS

XIX

FOR, lo ! I know thee hardly yet at all,
To tell the meaning of thy slightest speech
Or silence as my heart would deeply know !
And thou, e'en though all-wise, mightest still doubt
The wonder and sincerity of worship
Of him harping before thee at thine ark !
Thou mightest deem him one but of the throng
Idly frequenting this thy tabernacle
For casual augury ; not one who comes
Searching the revelations for some song
Of absolute insight and significance —
Who would be King in Israel ; or dead.

LOVE POEMS

XX

LOVE, but perchance thou art not then aware
Of speech unto the theme that stirreth me ?
Thou hast not broken silence in thine heart ;
And but with some lip-music fool'st mine ear
Unwittingly, with merely natural speech
Of maidenhood, not supernature's way ?
The womanly divine but slumbereth still ;
And this is witchery though nought of love ? —
And yet, though thou wert soulless even in song,
Need I be as the deaf fill'd with despair ?
I fear not, hope not, doubt not ; knowing all speech
Symphonic in thee : as thou art my soul.

PSALMS

XXI

BUT unto thee divine I turn and pray
With expectation full by prayer to win
Through grace vouchsafed that which by works
alone

Were nowise merited. For by the prayer,
Utter'd in perfect faith of grace to be,
I lift beyond the human to thy life
Of miracle and am with thee divine.
I asking of thee that thou realize, love,
Merely the meaning of our humanhood. —
Were 't for an hour, a day, this love I ask,
'T were somewhat then to tax a finite faith.
But it is only for eternity.

LOVE POEMS

XXII

AY, 't is the absoluteness of the grace
Demanded that ensureth confidence.
How might I ask thee any finite boon
With hope to win or courage for the loss —
We being, we both, but soulless at the last
If chaffering of other gift than love?
'T is certain that the prayer, and so the grace,
Concludeth every possibility
Of earth's well-being. Bitter, dear, as were
That hour when thou shalt cast presumption down,
Rather would I be thine scorn'd and rejected
Than high-priest unto any of them all.

PSALMS

XXIII

FOR what were I advantaged by the speech
Of any oracle of those not thine ?
Profuse be many of the multi-gods
In favor unto men idolatrous
As thousand of their prophets still report.
So be it, I have unto the world without
No word authentic to proclaim. Beneath
Thy common tabernacle I but stand
'Mid many ; and am not yet call'd within
The holier place, nor ever may be call'd.
Enough. I know the shrine is sanctified ;
And thou art God in Israel alone.

LOVE POEMS

XXIV

AND thus by being alone the God Most High
Yieldest thou sanction to the oracles
Of those idolaters and makest their sin
A splendor and a safeguard unto earth.
If in thy majesty thou still art proven,
Defined and revered by being above
All pettier godships ; then, by this thy place
Unique beyond all sanctuaries else,
Are they authentic oracle and those
Not all-deluded in their worshiping.
Troth, I have elsewhere worship'd ; yet am come
Not sinful unto wisdom beyond all.

•

PSALMS

XXV

THEREFORE it were not wholly ruinous,
As might have been were faith less liberal,
This that I learn from other prophets now
Proclaim'd anent thee with assured self-truth.
If thou hast spoken, ah, to them, not me,
And through some oracle not thine alone,
'T were otherwise a faith-destroying shame.
But now I bow to thine inscrutable
Benignity that thou to man some least
Hath spoken, if yet not in thine own way
As I had deem'd thy best and holiest.
I lie before thee stricken, but not dumb.

LOVE POEMS

XXVI

AND from the silence of thy proper shrine
Cometh a sudden sound of purer proof
Than any heard and by their tongues retold
From other oracle. I cease from prayer
And hearken only; and am wholly rapt
By wonder of the beauty of that voice.
It speaketh not the last ennobling word
Of absolute sanction to the waiting soul.
It sayeth not: "I choose thee." But the God
(O love, the God-in-thee!) hath said at last
(And I myself hearing it do believe):
"I hear thee. Verily thy God I am!"

PSALMS

XXVII

THEREFORE unto the Lord sing a new song,
Concluding every symphony of earth
In one word, meet for man unto his God.
Unto the God within me and in thee
Give prophecy, speaking before the Lord
The word His wisdom holdeth heart in heart !
Therefore, " I love thee ! " sing I openly ;
Knowing thy soul hath hearken'd, knowing all
Of earth, thine earth, will tell thee of my love
And there be no concealment, but all truth
Be utterly reveal'd and world be new.
Therefore new heaven, new earth, sing thee this
song.

LOVE POEMS

XXVIII

FOR I am as a man made over new,
Regenerate and transfigured, resurrect
From out the charnel of the love gone by.
Thou stretchest forth thy finger and sayest
“Come.”

And the rigor melts in rapture, and the ear
Heareth the call that had not before heard;
And a great morning bursts over the eyes
With inrush of the sunshine from above,
As the grave opens and the sepulchre
Falleth asunder and the soul is free.
And Lazarus he waketh suddenly
And filleth his vision with thy seraph face.

PSALMS

XXIX

AH ! but, behold, as I arise to speak :
“ Master ! ” and touch thy garment and be heal’d —
Behold, the hand, that I in death had dream’d
Held forth to succor and be miracle,
Withdraweth ; the vision melteth and the tomb
Closeth anew upon the doom’d at last. —
Thy pardon, Lord, that he who lieth dead
Had dream’d of resurrection ! Could thy power
But grant a quietude within the grave,
The charnel scarce were desolate. But now
I desperately aspire, eternally
I suffocate within thy sepulchre !

LOVE POEMS

XXX

YET will I not the miracle shall fail
Wholly ; nor thou be God unhumanized,
Not walking on the earth to save the dead.
Nor if thou walkest of earth shall I admit
Thee undivine because I cannot rise.
It is my spirit's failure that draws me back ;
I was not sleeping but was truly dead.
And now it is thy miracle's success,
Best resurrection that might come to me,
To agonize within my charnel-house !
Belovèd, I thank thee for thy miracle,
Who learn my doom and make my life of it.

PSALMS

XXXI

FOR one last privilege thou canst not take :
The mystery, that I half-waked to thee ;
The joy, that I have been thy doorkeeper,
In sanctity despising Belial's feasts.
If from the temple thou hast purged me out,
Yet never was I there a trafficker
Nor scoffer ; but have recollection now
Of the sterner cult : Jehovah, Lord-I-Am. —
'T were clearer so. I might forsooth confuse
My mere humanity with thy divine,
Wert thou, too, human ! And I now rejoice
In thine authentic wrath for Sign of God.

NATURE AND RELIGION

NATURE AND RELIGION

I

BELOVÈD, I in obedience to thy will
Declared by oracle of flame vouchsafed
Am fled before thee and am cover'd now
Of wilderness. Not as the dove wing-borne
To dwell at peace ; but with a patient toil
Hour by hour, day added unto day,
Have I fared forestward through forest depths
To reach earth's rigor and be death with it.
Thou hast denied thy live humanity
In thine own person. Wherefore am I fled
(Balk'd of all aspiration) to the deeps
To find thee. And, behold ! thou art not here.

LOVE POEMS

II

THERE are whose wisdom findeth a divine
In earth sans aspiration to achieve ;
Who would suppose thee in thy stocks and stones
Without discrimination. Not so I.
The ways of wilderness I well have known
Long ere I knew of thee. The joys uncouth,
Confused felicities of beast, of bird,
The multitudinous mating of the trees,
Have not been seal'd from me. And so I come
As to an old familiar to these paths
Of earth the elder birth before God was.
And, lo ! how might earth's godlessness mean thee ?

NATURE AND RELIGION

III

THERE are who, failing faith in beast, bird, branch,
As these are brute-like, beast-like, fain have set
God over against any of His works
Beyond and yet not of them. These are fled
Even forestward and unto wilderness
In fear but not in fair obedience
To any call divine. And these would dwell
Living the life uncouth, the monstrous love,
The multitudinous bestialness indeed
In brute content, forgetful still of thee.
May I who fail of faith in beast and bird
Thus also utterly lose faith in thee ?

LOVE POEMS

IV

LOVE ! therefore, rising from the ways of beast
And branch, upreaching from the forest deeps
Their labyrinth and dimness, have I climb'd
Even to these rock-set hilltops, worn o' the wind,
O' the lightning burnt at a blast, but thus in sweep
Commanding from above prospect of all
Earth's brute-like multitudinous upthrusts
Of mountainous emotions rough and swarth.
Here of these hills for an hour may I assume
The outlook as of faith self-lift within ;
To reinterpret earth in terms at worst
Of some intelligence and truth of thee ?

NATURE AND RELIGION

V

THE noon is on all nature : the poise of light
Intense as once the stroke that on these hills
Fell to yield vision by the fiery wrack.
Now is the solstice of the searching day
To reach within the dim wood-fastnesses
Their dens of indiscrimination still
And strike and clear all re-creatingly
As at the God-birth when light first moved upon
The chaos. Now my soul, annihilate
Late by thy word which erst created it,
Seeth its death — foregone — yet none less near,
And needing re-creation in thy name.

LOVE POEMS

VI

FOR God (and by the godship of the world
I ever mean love's insight self-defining,
Within and yet without and through all things,
Their substance, strength and purpose!) God being
not

Found of the wilderness as earth is brute
And bestial in its deep primordial sin
Of indiscrimination self from self;
God being not earth i' the birth, and earth alone
Not satisfying as earth's throes of the throng
Are over against God's Self and not of Him:
Therefore art thou not to be found of earth
As earth is seen and known in primal fact.

NATURE AND RELIGION

VII

TOWARD earth's first fact I did indeed return
(Because thou saidst: "Divine ye shall not be.")
Therewith to dwell in dim bewilderment
As beast and branch as they for fact are known —
Without faith in them and not finding thee.
Now have my feet aspired, mine eyes attain'd
In some sort to an introspect of earth
As from some secret eminence of soul
(Of soul's necessity, akin to thee!)
Down-gazing forestward to comprehend
The selfhood, spiritual determinateness,
The godliness of wilderness — by thee.

LOVE POEMS

VIII

AND thus upon these lofty uplands stand
I strong of prospect by the self-death foregone ;
Confronting with the sense of splendor still
The misery of the meaner ways of life
Whereto thy speech hath doom'd me. There may be
God in the wilderness. There may be yet
Thou in the deeps whereto I must descend,
Thou lifting, sustaining as these hills sustain
The dim uncertain patience and the toil
Unending and unresting, infinite stint.
Here of these hills I learn there is a God
Could I but find Him. For I see as He.

NATURE AND RELIGION

IX

BEHOLD a beauty and wonder of the world —
Thy name and definition ! — not of thee,
Yet, as I see, seen in the faith of thee
And otherwise not wonder-beautiful !
Here is the ordering of rock and stream,
The rigor of nature systemized and true
Declared. And truth is utterly of thee.
Deep calleth unto deep when I to thee
Speak from this wilderness in faith of thee
The meaning and intelligence of these
Thy soul ; despite thy soul-denial still ! —
Though they be, yea, apart as deep from deep.

LOVE POEMS

X

THUS in thy person art thou vital yet
By virtue of that earth-divinity
Thou canst not, love, forego. For thou art God
Unto my spirit, though unto these mine eyes
Not visible. The seen by the unseen
My soul must reinterpret and thereby,
By virtue of the omnipresence proven
Of this thy person whence I am fled away,
Acknowledge and proclaim thee to thyself
Beloved ; and therefore as love within these all
To constitute the world thou wouldst cast down.
Deep still sustaineth deep : though I lose thee.

NATURE AND RELIGION

XI

THE noon-hour passeth and I again descend
Down unto mire and meanness by thy doom ;
Doom'd to the patient toil, the faring forth
Through ways of wilderness. But not as erst
The dim bewilderment. The rage uncouth,
The multitudinous primordial sin,
Even by its systematic ordering seen,
Intendeth thee above, beyond yet through
Each beast and branch ; not as in primal fact
Bestial nor brutal, but as spiritual
Each creature of the nether, elder birth
Intending God and therefore one with Him.

LOVE POEMS

XII

AND therefore one with thee as each must fail
To achieve thee and thereby defineth thee
The Infinite in Whom are these at all
Creatures of meaning and intelligence
Intelligible to the searching soul.

Lo ! in obedience, love, unto thy will
Supreme, am I fled unto wilderness,
Unfearing and unloathing these that yet
Are not thou and are full of fear and blame.
I as these lost, acknowledging my fall
And frenzy of aspiration thwart, am fled
To wilderness from thee. And thou art here.

NATURE AND RELIGION

XIII

BELOVÈD, for at thy word the universe
Fell ruin'd. The mountains to the plains ran down
Molten ; the seas dried up ; and all in ash
Confusèd lay for world-bewilderment.
I alone, stricken, I alone remain'd
Of all God's souls in the world to weep at thee
And drown earth's devastation. But, behold !
An ordering anew, a beauty born
Of desolation as had never been !
Ah ! for, belovèd ! thy face of deity
Unveil'd ! and in thy naked hand the sword !
And this my soul, as every soul, self-known !

LOVE POEMS

XIV

WORLD so hath come full circle. At the first
Said He : "Let there be light." And thereupon
Within the fume of the vapors burn'd a flame
And show'd them to themselves, that they did part :
The nether from the upper : the firmament
Establish'd of the fiat. And there was light. —
Now through the chaos of the crumbling years
Cometh the new creation. At the last
The culmination of aspiring earth ;
The lift almost to heaven ; but, from above,
The stroke ; the desolation ; and the voice :
"Let there be Light." Belovèd ! and there — art
Thou.

PURGATORY AND JUDGMENT

PURGATORY AND JUDGMENT

I

LOVE, I have been admitted to thy life
Anew ; thereby myself being wrought alive
Well-nigh as formerly or e'er thy face
Was veil'd e'en by that fire which, flaring it,
O' the instant slew the soul down out of me.
Alive as formerly ; and yet with life
Extinct. As one who, lifted from the grave
By grace, is call'd before the eternal Judge
Through His purgation of a thousand years :
I moving, breathing yet within the grave
My thousand years ; whilst over me my judge
Denies life's privilege to plead of life.

LOVE POEMS

II

IT were as though all witness of my soul
Ceased at this crisis when my soul awakes
For fresh performance ; I, even as one dumb
Despite lip-motion simulate of speech ;
And thou, ignoring all that tells of life
Now teeming, toiling in me : whilst thy heart
Ponders the sear'd leaves of that screed o' the hope
Now fallen forever : ponders, nor approves ;
And dooms the lost soul to be lost soul still
For all its turmoil, all its potency
Of reformation through thy purging grace. —
How canst thou judge of life in a thing dead ?

PURGATORY AND JUDGMENT

III

FOR I have been denied to speak of love,
Which love was, is, and shall be my life all.
And therefore am as dead within my grave
Though lifted in all else to share with thee
Life ; am as one thus call'd beyond the grave
To soul-purgation, yet who may not plead
Of the regenerance of his very soul —
So misseth absolution ! 'Fore thy face
Must I stand loveless ; though not blamelessly
Might any man approach thee (Thou of Love !)
Save rapt in light of like divinity !
And thus am I foredoom'd as one who sins.

LOVE POEMS

IV

YET is my judge august, and being all-wise
Shall search me deeper than my soul may know.
The depths shall not be hid though I be dumb ;
Nor love, denied love's utterance, fail of speech
In love's obedience to thy dear decree !
Thou wilt not, love, mistake the sombre mien
Of him who living dwelleth as the dead
For death at heart ; nor fail to feel within
My shroud a vivid fire of sacrifice
Consuming, sanctifying the true man
Beyond all peradventure of such crime
Of sacrilege. For thou wilt see the soul.

PURGATORY AND JUDGMENT

V

AND shall I dread that thou shalt see and hear
That which is in me ? Ah ! though save for thee
Forsooth were I some monstrous mould of sin,
Love yet were some salvation ; and a love
Toward thee directed and concluding thee
(Such love as mine) were stuff that maketh man —
Though scorn'd, yea, and rejected, spurn'd, cast
down—

But little lower than the angels ; ay, ·
Crown'd as with glory and power, half-divine !
Love, in the scathless confidence of truth
Must I approach thee though no stain were hid !
Though Hell were in me, thou shouldst learn it Love.

LOVE POEMS

VI

THEREFORE I scarce need seek to hide my face
From thee for shame of any sacrilege.
I can but pray thy judgment, searching deep,
Shall see as I see as I look within.
For there within seem many truths of thee,
And many universes of thy soul,
And many unions of thy heart and strength
Mysteriously through every hour of earth :
That all is sanctity. Were sacrilege
Such victory ? Were my self-searching soul
Blasphemous with acknowledgment of God
(Though God condemn me !) as its self self-known ?

PURGATORY AND JUDGMENT

VII

AND if, inspired with sense of thee within,
The mute soul mutely agonizing speak
Some syllable of godship to its God,
Some irrepressible momentary lapse
In witness of its worship — shall its doom
Burst straightway for such insubordinance?
Belovèd, were I but raised to thy right hand
O' the wonder-seat, how sure the ways of God
Were then the ways of man, regenerate man!
But now, thy mercy! if my lips must feel
Some suffocation of the sepulchre
Although my breast breathe at thy dread command.

LOVE POEMS

VIII

NAY, were not any service, which might show
Thee to thyself within me, in some least
A reconciling of the rift 'twixt God
And His creation that belongeth to Him?
Sith God thou art then this thy kingdom of
The spirit were of thee self-responsibly;
And this thy condemnation of the world
A contradiction passing hope of peace.
If in my service some obedience
Haply seem wanting (which may troth forfend!),
Perchance in me some power of thee prevaieth
Over thyself to prove thy world thine own!

PURGATORY AND JUDGMENT

IX

I KNOW not. — Wholly yet into thy hands
Now I commit my spirit undismay'd.
No mercy I need ask : for, that myself,
Such as I am, am wholly made of thee ;
And fair or foul, thy saint or satan, still
Am servant, self-essential to thy state.
Into thy presence must I fearlessly
Pass and be proven, fronting thee as one
Who finds at last that peace, that comprehension,
Beyond all understanding. I though mute
Must speak thee to thyself. Though thou condemn
I shall not be sequester'd from thy soul.

LOVE POEMS

X

THEREFORE, through whatsoever pools of peace
Thou purgest me, shall I my thousand years,
Unto the sounding of the trumpet, lie
In silent ecstasy for sight of God.
The vision melts not though the tomb be seal'd.
And at the head and feet of me, I know,
Are guardians, ever with the speed of thought
Swift to be pleading at the throne of thee,
With intercession for who will not plead.
The thousand years of thine eternity
Are as an instant. From the tomb my song
Already riseth as the morning shines.

VEDAS

VEDAS

ADITI — THE NATURE OF LIFE

MEN may not, though by subtlest scrutiny,
By prayer and offering at thy secret shrine,
Elucidate this mystery of breath,
Of love's beginning and the source of worlds.
We can but feel, some flaw first must have been
That separateth self or world from thee.
We can but call thee Nature ; and be known
As to ourselves ; but cannot yet know thee.
We hymn thee as we sense thee, stream or sky,
Cloud, tempest, earth or star or sun, though none
Proven of thy substance, none divinely thee ! —
Belovèd, art thou then nought ; thou, self-unknown ?

LOVE POEMS

DY AUS — THE FIRMAMENT

WITHIN thy universal frame are set
All star-stuffs and all suns, establish'd vast
And wonderful. But, love, beyond aught else
This land of India proclaimeth thee.
And thou art fashioner of all beneath
Thy vault; and in thine image are all things
Fashion'd that anywise may move and know.
Wherefore art thou, in monstrance of Dyaus
The over-arching firmament, self-known
Even through thy creatures: and thyself art
whole. —
May thy vast wonder-working through my spirit,
As India, proclaim thee Fashioner!

VEDAS

PRITHIVI—THE EARTH

FOR, though these heavens are wide above the earth
Riftless, all incorrupted of the flaw
Of heart's humanity, yet were they nought,
A nescience and some void, chaotic, save
Even for these sufferant mountains and these plains
Half-parch'd yet springing : utterly thy work.
These art thou as by works thou shalt be known —
Earth of this Indian spiritual drought
Thine act-reality. And thus to earth,
To dust, to labor, to the pathos of them
In hourly, iterated tragedy
I turn and worship, naming them thy name.

LOVE POEMS

VARUNA—THE DARK SKY

STILL above earth, yet as some soul of it,
Thine immemorial mind and influence,
This inspiration of thy nightly stars !
Over all earth an hush is consecrate
To rest-renewal and to dream ; but, lo !
Close in the tree-tops, earth's own imagery
Of stars : the multiple glow-fly shimmering !

Love,

Thy distantness for guide divine ; and, love,
Within me love for image of thy lamps'
Flickering, as the night-breeze in the boughs
Sways ever the fiery wing-wisps. Thus I lie
Uncertain, blind save to the vast of thee.

VEDAS

USHAS—THE DAWN

NIGHT hath been, ay, upon the Indian plain :
Night ; and the ambient peaks majestic
Have been but blacknesses along the stars,
Blotting their brilliance, proving them aloof.
And India lay beneath them lightlessly.
Now art thou come, with paling of the stars
Before a nearer brilliance, thou the Dawn,
Disclosing in thyself the world enorb'd
And wonderful, and every hill a flame
Of orient increase, guardian now and source
Of field's fecundity. And in my soul
Wide India worships as it wakes and works.

LOVE POEMS

SOMA — THE ENLIGHTENING

YONDER the wakening of the roseate hills,
And, lo ! the warming of the vales, and now
The surging into gold of these green plains
And golden-silver of these quickening streams !
And now the myriad humankind astir
Turn to the sacred waters ; and the shrines
Send myriad murmurings of the heart devout
At mount in air unto the day's high gates
Wide-oped, exultant. And the fervid draught
Of thine elixir courseth through all things,
Soma, fit beverage of the soul and strength
Pour'd of thy spirit granting this new day !

VEDAS

SURYA — THE SUN

THINE the new day, as thou hast granted it.
And thine the labor as the enlighten'd earth
And every people of thy teeming land
Work in the name of thee because of light.
Light on the lofty mountains, and at last
Light in the rugged vales and fields of tilth,
Light in the water-courses through and through
Resplendent. And upon the barrens stark
Of this my parch'd but high-uplifted heart
A breadth of barren light! — I thank thy heart
That yields such searching sight, illumining
All India the while it withereth it.

LOVE POEMS

AGNI—THE PASSION OF FIRE

FOR Agni art thou and a sacrifice :
Insufferable by heat of energy
Exhausting these that would be of thy life.
Thine this afflatus that, updrawn to thee,
Would live by thee and therefore perisheth
Consumed, half-ashen by the growth of it.
One sacrifice, a furnace as of flame
Unto thy cauterization lies the soul,
This India, this Indian quick heart
Of me that feareth whilst it fain were thine.
This knowledge of thee is earth's agony ;
This fire of thee within, the spirit's end.

VEDAS

INDRA — THE SKY OBSCURED

AND therefore through the smoke of sacrifice
A shroud for India, as for my soul.
A covering for its too naked wrath.
Lo ! we have seen thee and been all ablaze
Through noon's perfervor, gazing on earth's self
Self-known, and through earth-nature on thy self
As thou art known unto thyself by works.
And we are blinded by excess of sight ;
And the hot day doth wane before its hour
With fume of the pomp funereal, with dust
Of the death-striving and the doom attain'd.
Thou wanest from thy truth, lest love should swoon.

LOVE POEMS

MARUTS — THE TEMPESTS

AND with the waning waxeth an untruth
Of militant denial, earth and air
Convulsed and lightning-rent, thunderous-crush'd
With frenzy of dismay that thou art done,
Art sheer withdrawn out of the truth of things
And self-conceal'd, world wots not how nor where.
Enough that truth hath turn'd away, enough
That madness hath got hold of us, and we
Are rent and rack'd: the spirit hurtling, love,
Against itself to dash down love and all
Drown'd as in soul's immitigable grief
At loss and desolation — losing thee.

VEDAS

MITRA — THE AFTERMATH

YET where hath been love's insight can be never
Mere desolation. For the sense of loss
Involves thee still. And this embitter'd clod
Of wreck'd sad earth hath known a noon and thee.
The streams are over-brimm'd and every bough
Drops sweetness on the wilderness. Earth's sorrow
Hath yet fecundity by sense of thee.—
The song may come to voice or may not come.
In the hush'd evening air perchance may rise
New hymn to thine embalming beauty, fresh
Praise to thy truth that hath been. Or perchance
Shall all things fade voiceless upon the night.

LOVE POEMS

ASVINS—THE TWILIGHT

BETWEEN the doubtful lights lies India ;
'Twixt daytime and the darkness. Now the clouds
Are slow roll'd back ; and where thy sun hath set
Lingers the serious saffron ; and the stars
Come one by one. And all is as if day
Had never been, save for earth's sadness still
And shroud of vapor. And the evensong
Comes not. — As thou seemst lost out of the world,
What were to fill the song or give it goal ?
Who art thou that thou knowest not thyself
By works : who art thou that thou knowest not love ?
What were thy name but Dusk — spoke doubtfully ?

VEDAS

YAMA — THE NATURE OF DEATH

AS thou wast ere the being of all things,
Aditi, so art thou soul's aim and end :
Yama, the course of time beyond all years.
As thou art Nature, art thou more than life
Or love, that which death-dusk but openeth.
Though we be by this mystery of self
Debarr'd from thee, yet, being but emanate
Of thy self-involution, must we come
Back to the nought and nescience of thy name.

Belovèd, shall all of wonder life hath wrought
Despairingly be thus annihilate ?
Or shalt thou wake and learn thyself love's world ?

HELLENICS

HELLENICS

THE ÆGEAN SEA

I

BELOVED ! I saw a cloud o'er Samothrace.
Behind it streaming flew refulgent robes
Steep'd of the setting sun whose rays, conceal'd
Yet saturating as with liquid light,
Gave glory. And the very shape thereof
Was glory. For above the purpled isle
That cloud, procumbent to the sweep o' the wind
And trailing splendor, yet uprear'd a front
With outlook ample and an arm held forth
Bearing, yea, somewhat very like a Voice :
Itself the Victory ! — And Greece hath said
Its prayer and prophecy, its Word of thee.

HELLENICS

II

PATMOS might hold me or old Pergamon,
Ephesian Artemis stretch forth a hand
To claim a kinship if of trust, self-born,
In some divinity, some home for man
And hope of present peace beyond the years.
Even poor Troy hath treasure of a kind
For him who battling though against the gods
Sinks fighting manfully still fill'd with faith
That soul indomitable shall yet sustain
The song of potency, the poetry
Of heroism, fate-defiant : aye
Some wonder, some example of thy name.

LOVE POEMS

PARNASSOS

I

I, AT the centre of the world of old,
To thee, the centre of a world to-day —
Thy world and mine as thou hast made it! Love,
A world sad and austere, so suitable
To faiths departed, deities long dead.
I at the old Kastalian spring, to thee
Fountain and sibyl of a sweeter truth
(If awful thou, yet not inexorable)
Nearer to utterance by each breath of thee.
May thy prophetic omen, sinister
Indeed, yet none less worshipful, inspire
My tongue to this high serious hymn of trust!

HELLENICS

II

THE snows are near around me, at my feet
The ruins of as sage authority
As ever guarded man by pagan might.
Nothing remaineth of it save the snow
And some scarce-still-decipherable slab
Whence issued voices of the gods to men :
Mere stone now and the everlasting cold.
Thou hast desired of me that I should be
As that dull ruin or these speechless snows.
Yet, shall the voice of faith be stopp'd, shall soul
Not burst anew into some wiser song
Sweeter for more self-knowledge by this pain ?

LOVE POEMS

HELIKON

I

PARNASSOS neighboring and Helikon
Not far, I turn me to that Hippokrene
Call'd Hellas : history of ceaseless strife,
Self-wreck and self-despite, yet over all
That high seat of the Muses, lofty place
Of eminent understanding, reverence
And proud acceptance of the destiny :
A soul without a savior, yearning toward
The god-impassible, yet figuring
A fairer insight of the God-made-man !
I drink of it and take the destiny
Of Hellas to prefigure thy divine.ⁱ

HELLENICS

II

THE gods are absent in their calm apart.
The God was never here. — But let me now
Interpret to my soul (so unto thee !)
This history by aid of thy benign
Conciliation of the strife and woe.
Temples and cities are there ; names of gods
For implication of the name of thee ;
Triumphs, and falls in turn of each from strength —
The city or the god — though over all
The beauty and the benison. Be this
Thine answer by thine oracle : “ Yea, live,
“That Hellas’ beauty teach thee more of me !”

LOVE POEMS

EPIDAUROS

I

WHAT though their God of Healing may have fail'd
A thousand times ? The sick soul yet must come
To any sign of comfort, to seek there
The strength anew for travail undismay'd.
And to the precinct of the healing god
I came to ease me of that grievous hurt
Which only thou canst ease. And there I slept
In the temple and had vision (as have slept
Thousands before me and had vision) — thee
So mine ineffably, so passing kind
I knew it was a dream. And I awoke
And straight inscribed the vision on a stone.

HELLENICS

II

AND, till the dream come true (as now 't is truth
Of union deeplier than this bitterness),
Am I an exile, wanderer accursed
With desolation gnawing at the heart ;
Knowing mine home, yet ever barr'd from it.
Shall I, like Mykenæan chief of old
(Himself how eager, how soul-sick of war !),
Dare a return unto the hearthlessness
Call'd home, to find some seeming welcome there :
Reluctant welcome, but a dagger sheathed ;
Thy smile compell'd but to confuse this heart
And take it by surprise and pierce it through ?

LOVE POEMS

MYKENÆ

I

THY mercy hath refrain'd from piercing through
An heart worn aged, though the world 's yet young,
In service of thee. Though my wandering seems
Interminable, yet mine early soul
Yieldeth anew some relic of that dawn
When life was sweetest by the birth of thee ;
And proud emprise unto earth's humblest craft
Lent dignity, lent continence through all
The superabundance, self-exuberance
In first awakening unto beauty. Dear,
Truce to contention ; yield thee, of thy strength !
For I am weak and would not be at war.

HELLENICS

II

I AM not of such stuff as these of old
Who sought contention for the motion of it,
Feeling no incongruity in power
Stiff-poised by strain-imposed rigidity
Symbolic of the tensive, strenuous stroke
That knew no peace save in the lust of death.
I know no lust of death. I fain would live;
And only war by this the weakness of me,
Desiring peace, remembering the joy
Of that which seem'd peace when the soul was
 young. —
E'en these did fail at last from strength for strife.
The sceptre pass'd into another hand.

LOVE POEMS

ARGOS

I

YET is the sceptre wielded still by thee
(Mistress of wide adventure, wonder-queen !),
Compelling man to "build, equip, launch forth
"His foresight", to encompass mightier songs
Than those of hearthstone and the high-built walls
Of palace frowning on the plain of home.
Fertility of cunning, resourceful sleight
Of hand and intellect thou callest forth
For chronicle and rhapsody to bind
(With beauty that is epic) at a birth
The thousand isles of men, the races of
An hundred cities, celebrant of life.

HELLENICS

II

WHAT though the tale be myth, what though no
Troy

Nor ethnic oath were anywise of thee —
My truth, as my remembrance? If the dream
Of the seer unify these many minds
Of men's cross-purpose, build unto thy praise
An eminence of marvel-minstrelsy,
'T is ample, 't is the substance founding all.
To thee, then, this insistence on the truth
Of the fire-flash of mountain-soul to soul
(Which thou deniest) announcing to the world
The accomplish'd fact of unity, at once
Avenging shame and flaring: "Greece is born!"

LOVE POEMS

OLYMPIA

I

FOR thou didst at the first avenge for me
Old shames upon the world by yielding me
A new life, purpose and performance toward
The sacredness of thee ; when all before
Was chaos, wreckage of a fall of gods
Whom no strength union'd at the last to save —
Mere blackness and confusion — clear'd by thee.
The naked giant limbs lay toss'd and heap'd
'Neath Pelion under Ossa, if so be ;
But unregenerate, unreconciled,
Writhing and torturing to throes earth all.
But thou didst order me to health and strength.

HELLENICS

II

AND shalt thou order nought save health and strength
To be Greece and to teach men there is One,
Beyond and through? No deeplier-knitted bond
Than this of bodily capacities
Beyond the nations, knit and whole but by
Accomplishment as mindlessness may do?
No steadfast facing of the mystery
Of me and thee, no resolution of it,
At worst, by insight of an one-in-each
Mutual by some absolute symmetry? —
Turn we from acme of the earlier Greece
To see what still an almost-soul could do!

LOVE POEMS

ATHENS

I

IT was not by Olympian Zeus alone
That Greece essay'd the wonder-unity ;
But by that splendor sprung full-arm'd of him,
Athena, matron of the mounting mind,
Preceptress of the intellect that knows
Of thee and thine and may embody thee
In works of marvel and a high delight ;
Though dwelling scarce in thee nor, as thy soul
Permeant with creative sympathy,
Beyond all gods, interpreter of them.
She but interprets as a man may feel
And see, who stands within the pale of death,

HELLENICS

II

BEWILDER'D and self-hostile, seeking but
Defiance and escape by masking death
In petty permanence of lifeless stone. —
There is an art un-Grecian, an insight
Of soul's identity, through sacrifice,
Achieving self-eternal permanence
By constancy of alterance on and on
Through service and salvation ever new.
This art I 'd bring thee, who hast proven art
But life beyond death's possibility :
Truth love-embodied. Alkestis, Greece' great
 saint
So near achieved, so barely miss'd, that goal !

LOVE POEMS

SPARTA

I

AH ! but endurance, failing in the stone
Perchance, else in the tragedy of fate
Swept by the futile fate-catastrophe
Beyond the plain life-problem (and the soul
Thus proven, by reversion to itself,
Inly supreme and substance of all fate) —
Endurance as the maxim of the soul
Essay'd experiment and nobly won,
At worst, world-reputation ; that, were I
But "Spartan", thou shouldst never hear the
 wail
Of the vital agony, but go thy way
Ignorant of the vulpine tooth and claw !

HELLENICS

II

I HAVE been Spartan, were the half but told.
Yet like that sterner people I am come
To helplessness, destruction finally ;
And by my nature must make song of it,
Ennobling desolation and dismay
With still some pæan : though the grave at last
Be mark'd but : " He, in battle ". I would fain
Fall uncomplaining ; yet believe that Greece
Hath possibility of splendor still
Beyond these mountains' melancholy ; still
A vale upspringing : though Taygetos
Guard nothing save some lingering memory.

LOVE POEMS

THEBES

I

ENDURANCE yet can be an ignominy,
Indeed, an opportunist lingering
Of energy, a biding till the time
Serve and the man, that after centuries
Of insignificance shall surge in sort
A short-lived power, and the swift years seem
True splendor till the slow long season come
Anew of namelessness and indolence.
Shall any stew of stupor sensuous,
Stirr'd by one passing impulse, stand for Greece —
Epaminondas, after Perikles,
Be figure of the pagan prophecy?

HELLENICS

II

NAY, from that failure of Euripides
To speak a perfect wisdom, must the fall
Of Greece, even as the failure of my soul
From thee, be mark'd unto thy chronicling —
Some flickering, some crude Aristotle still
Deciphering the riddle put by her
Who sat beside the way and did devour
All failure for its self-acknowledged doom.
Dear, I avow the failure : am as Thebes
The briefly powerful to mouth of thee
A moment ; ere thy sphinx eat of my heart,
Derisive of love's ill-conceived reply.

LOVE POEMS

KORINTH

I

AND were it nobler then to aim at nought
Save voyage as for market-trafficking
In quest of selfish gain, for barren meed
Rendering world service but unwittingly ?
Fain would I render world no service such
As, openly oblivious of thee,
Comes unaware, unzealous from the hand
That looks not, ay, beyond its hoarded coin,
Its comfort and its vain caparison.
Fain would I serve even Hermes for the sake
Of service : else admit my soul for lost,
My sense of thee misfeatured at the birth.

HELLENICS

II

I FANCY, some who served the sordid god
In Greece' degeneration felt as I
The degradation from the soul's estate
Of worship, sought indeed some solace in
The name of mystery — if missing it
None less by sure debasement in the choice
Of her to whom the offering was made.
Some cult here linger'd with an early name
Call'd mystic mainly : though a last resort,
A shame and putrefaction. — So, I pass
To Aphrodite ? No ! Her priestess-crew
Knew nothing of the holy theme of thee.

LOVE POEMS

ELEUSIS

I

ALONG the sweetness of the sacred way,
Through blossoming wide fields and sunlit farms
Of almond, olive and the pasturing flocks ;
The sea beside and, all around, the hills ;
With voice of the lark a-wing and bells of sheep
Tinkling ; lo ! hither, therefore, are we come —
Eleusis, the Ineffable ; and we stand,
Thy soul and I, even at the source of grace
As Hellas sought or found it in her gods.
The sea beside, and, all around, the hills :
We stand, thy soul and I, and dream at last
Deep in the dear Demetrian Mysteries.

HELLENICS

II

MEN may not know their meaning. Men have said
The springtime as it cometh and is fair
Teacheth a hope which herein was reveal'd
To the initiate ; and men have said
Sad autumn and the earth's descent to sleep
Taught of perpetuance : but we may not know.
Enough that votive monuments inscribed
Testify to the healing and the help
Within those hearts that still envisaged death
Yet came here for the comfort. And I too
Testify to the comfort and declare
Thy mystery ; and save me by thy soul.

LOVE POEMS

DELPHI

I

UNTO this temple (as my soul to thee !)
Repair'd the cities and the thousand isles
For counsel, and received (or seem'd to sense)
An insight supernatural to guide
Each undertaking. Never went away
A worshiper without some wisdom earn'd
To dwell with it and be more man thereby.
Somewhiles 't was desperate, else double-voiced,
The maxim ; and the man went forth to fall
Or not fall, wiser by the proof alone :
Yet reverent through all bewilderment,
Resolute that the oracle be truth.

HELLENICS

II

THE altar of the god of loftiest light,
Apollo, whence the oracle arose !
Lo ! I have vow'd me unto thee for life
Or death, sworn on this altar by my love !
And unto thee, O Thou my Pythian !
Offer'd myself, fill'd with a living faith. —
Thine oracle hath spoke : “ Thou mayest live
“ And yet mayest not have faith ” — ambiguously ;
For life and hope are one. I ask again,
Fill'd with the faith anew : “ Declare to me ! ” —
And so shall still demand of thee till thou
Sayest, “ Thine hope may live ! ” — or, “ Thou
shalt die ! ”

LOVE POEMS

THE IONIAN SEA

I

I HAVE not seen Olympos. But the gods
Dwell doubtless there afar as in old days.
Christ hath not come, nor any ethic myth
Displaced their calm abandonment of man.
Man may, as Hellas all-time hath abode,
Endure beyond their ken though every breath
And work of man intended to their praise
Cry unto heaven for the truth to fall.
Greece have I seen, from sacred shrine to shrine
Made offering ; and still I see not thee
Unless in mystery. Yet I depart
With faith as formerly on homeward seas.

HELLENICS

II

UNTO the chief this islet was as home
Long-sought though hostile to a stranger-eye ;
Ithaka ; nothing but an ocean-rock
Wave-rack'd, scarce life-sustaining — save that here
Abode a welcome, faithfulness hard-proved
And found not wanting. Though my wandering
Be world-wide, yet in me that faithfulness
Abides as in her breast that sat at home :
Thyself that home : most, that the wonder-isles
Of Greece seduced to brief sojourning-place.
Be but that home ! Answer thou to my prayer :
“ Be welcome, wanderer ; for thy faith's sake.”

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

THE PILGRIM

I

THE visiting of each far holy place
Throughout earth's wide intelligence of thee ;
The entering within strange faiths of men
Anent thy fair familiar sacredness :
This is my portion ; driven forth, with all
The world to choose where I might but forget,
Haply ; where I might learn anew but thee !
Lo ! from my youth have I still visited
In adoration and have still beheld
(Despite the madness of men's fantasy)
The meaning of thee in the metaphor,
The poetry and godliness of things.

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

II

BEHOLD a folk maddest of fantasy,
Fill'd strangeliest with the wildest among dreams
Of thee, confused, multiform ! And my life
Fill'd erst with sanity by strength of thee
Is as their mysteries. — Shall I believe
Metempsychosis, that myself hath been
Thi's mythus ; and my knowledge of thee, nought ?
Or shall the self, facing the face uncouth
Of these monstrosities within my soul,
Elucidate the mystery, inform
With better wisdom of the lore of thee
The shifting palimpsest ; and prove it truth ?

LOVE POEMS

THE PARSEES

I

THE heaven-sent floods are far too clean for flesh ;
Contamination of the vital earth
Were vulgar sacrilege by my coarse clay ;
The eternal elements of the embalming flame
Require for fit associate but a soul ! —
Wilt thou thus that my body (of motion barr'd,
Balk'd the live splendor of a love-born strength
Of trust in cosmic consanguinity,
Spurn'd of the spirit of a passion of thee)
Be as the unentomb'd and naked dead
Exposed for carrion to the carrion fowl,
Pick'd to the bone's uncognizable dust ?

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

II

THE air above is choked with maws of prey,
The earth is widely as a charnel-room
Bespatter'd with the clots of offal food.
Some fire is needed if to purge the heart
That knows what worketh in the silence there :
That knows what reeketh between earth and heaven
Under the sun because no spirit it hath. —
Yet that which reeketh knoweth not its shame.
And that which shrinketh from the place unclean
Need never taste of death while still it shameth,
And knoweth as I know the passion I bear thee
For fire, associate fitly with my soul.

LOVE POEMS

THE MUSSULMANS

I

THERE is one God, not great above the rest
But sole, conclusive of divinity :
Allah-Akbār, the Strong, the Jealous One. —
No vague Brahmān is He ; but Jahveh's pride,
Transfused effectual retribution still,
Informing one alone, the chosen one
Muhammad, sword and trumpet-voice of Him.
There is one Word, not mythic-mild aloof,
But once to earth descended in the wrath
Here by my heart interpreted, as erst
By mouth of him, Muhammad, to all men. —
Wherefore my spirit worships toward thy West.

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

II

AH ! but a tale hath been of Him Who came
Not trumpet-voiced, not sword and scourge of God,
But kindly comforting His humankind ?
Yea, thou hast heard that where is worship, there
Love prayeth ; and where only love hath pray'd
Divinity is proved in answering prayer ? —
Life for a life ; soul for a soul ; ah, love
For love : the law of Jahveh as we both
Acknowledge His primal authority !
Life, soul and love I give thee : for thou hast them.
Life, soul and love shall prove thee by the law
Allah, conclusive of divinity.

LOVE POEMS

THE MOGULS

I

LO ! but an error fatal as profound ! —
A dome so beautiful were sweeter far
Than any Paradise. No soul enshrined
In such a mausoleum e'er shall see
God, unless God inhabit too the tomb. —
Sooth, 't were as well (were soul at all, without
Thee, to remain unto the body dead),
It were as well to rest eternally
Alluring haply God, with earth at peace ;
Nor seek to rise ! But rather would I writhe
In blistering ash, abhorrent still to thee :
That I might strive and lift to thee at last !

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

II

NAY, for a world which is a world of thee
Were beautiful as any Palace Tomb.
Though we be rust we need not further rise
Who fain would make for beauty with our hand
Assured that God inhabits though we die.
Ah! he that knoweth thee need never die,
But worketh beauty with unending breath. —
Peace to Jehān imperial and his soul!
A man inspired of beauty, knowing God
Even in the tomb and working as at peace,
For all earth's turmoil! — Wherefore with a peace
As this pure tomb shall be thy world to me.

LOVE POEMS

THE JAINS

I

A PEACE hath been conceived of harmlessness,
Restraint from rendering least injury,
For reason of the sanctity of each
Least instance of the spirit that is life.
To foster, nowise thwart — it might be so
Were Spirit, which is Life, the same in each
As is the self ; were every truth as mine
By my believing, and world's will but one. —
Shall I lose hold of whatso truth I owe
For fear to overwhelm a truth less sure,
Less absolute than this my love for thee ?
Belovèd, must I then cease from suing thee ?

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

II

THERE is a peace, couldst thou believe in it,
Of mutual sacrifice ; I grant thee so.
There is a peace whose perfect prosperousness
Of will within will, life within life, lives
By reconciliation constantly
Of thine not-mine, by give and take of death
Life's sustenance. But thou wilt not. And therefore
Must my love harm thee till my soul shall cease. —
There is no peace of mere passivity
Despite thy soul's new doctrine. Who would serve thee
Shall not forbear ; must never lose from life
Assertion of love's menace from all-time.

LOVE POEMS

THE GURUS

I

AND is there nothing new beneath the sun ?
Hath all been said and written ; that we now
Repeat old formulæ or fall from thee ?
Hath all been learn'd of wisdom and the ways
Of holiness, no utterance of thine
Ever to come to tell new paths of truth ?
Some inspiration hath been — here be men
With memory of each symbol of the screed
Sacred with wisdom of the serious past :
Of thee much hath been written. — Yet much else
Shall be. And all, Evangel, yea, as Law,
Enshrined in worship shall remain to me.

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

II

It may be that these too expect a day
Of final revelation unto earth ;
Their tri-une, riding on the clouds on high
In vision as the apocalypse — I know not.
I know but that thy silence may endure
To the last syllable ; and recorded time
Hold not the speech that shall transfigure me.
Still is the silence holy, memorable,
Teaching thy way of charity as faith
Unto my soul that cannot take thee false. —
They murmur of past passion ; but I suffer
Fresh crucifixions in thy dumbness now.

LOVE POEMS

THE SIKHS

I

DEEP speech there surely hath been ; and therethrough
Hath been initiation. Therearound
Are temples builded ; and thereon, with brow
Bent to the holy scripture, must I pore
Obedient, chasten'd if still suffering.
And all who read therein shall be compell'd
By virtue of the book to render awe
Unto its sacredness. Its mystic words
Shall burn before the nations, being of light,
Though none should comprehend. And comprehension
Doth my love still afford within thy shrine ! —
Wherefore art thou not dumb where speech hath been.

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

II

THE mighty murmur of repeating o'er
Thy solemn text falls on the inward sense
From thousand voices hourly of the heart.
The soul is all within thy temple walls
Ensymbol'd, and the open book contain'd
Is God visibly present unto me.
Thou mayest scoff: "He understandeth not
"The slightest syllable upon the book.
"His temple is a tomb wherein my truth
"Lies stifled if so be it truth at all."
Belovèd, the very gold upon these walls
Is wrought by thee and burnish'd by thy breath.

LOVE POEMS

THE MENDICANTS

I

AN half-whole ministry — to ask of earth
The earthly sustenance, that so the soul
By meditation without worldly care
May cumulate redemption for the world !
An half-whole ministry ! How may the spirit
Dependent upon earth for earthly alms
Be mighty to incorporate through earth
E'en such wan wisdom, innocent of things ?
Might I by taking thought but on thy word
Redeem world to thy best divinity
Of saving love, who for thy least of grace
Am beggar, famish'd for the moment's food ?

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

II

WITHIN the spirit I may beg of thee
Indeed ; but strive to stand responsible
In mine intelligence of earth and thee.
Mine the high burden of enlightening thee,
If so be, to reciprocal ministrance,
Each heart in heart, feeding the mutual soul.
Mine the almsgiving from the fulness of
Thine inspiration. And if so at last
Mine hand be beggar'd by thy riches in it,
Then hath the spirit no more need of alms.
Then earth and thou, my sustenance as care,
Absolve from mendicancy whom they save.

LOVE POEMS

THE BRAHMINS

I

THERE are who arrogate unto their caste
A preordain'd salvation, scarce of thee
Nor of themselves, yet yielded in thy name.
Yet am I of the twice-born : I have been
Born of myself and once again of thee.
Were any further birth efficient toward
Redemption ? Might some strange power, in thy
name,
Command performance of a ritual
Unmeaning ? Might a derogation from
Standard not set by thee debar from bliss ?
These are but once-born, born unto themselves
To perish by their misbegotten rules.

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

II

YET who am I to arrogate to self
Judgment superior to this priest-craft's power
Of self-insistent insight ? Whence my claim
To some sole comprehension of thy will ?
Nought save mine innermost dependence on thee
Commandeth inspiration. In myself
Am I but born to unintelligence
And failure still to apprehend of truth.
It is the second birth that openeth
The heavens and declareth deity
To eyes enravish'd of unwonted things.
And since that birth had truth seem'd as mine
own.

LOVE POEMS

THE VISHNUITES

I

OUR life preserveth not itself from day
To day save by some power not ourselves
Preserving over us, some Permanence
Permeant through the novelty of worlds
And their decay, some godliness which Is.
I, might my breath be taken once again
And yet again, might any pulse of me
Be mine beyond the momentary throb
Save by thy guardianship, thy sacredness
Ensphering hour by hour and making Soul
This coming and departing momentarily ? —
And didst thou erst create : and shalt destroy ?

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

II

FOR by thy godliness art thou enwholed,
And needs art that which Was, which brought to pass
The spirit of me; needs art also that
Which Shall Be, by whose being comes an end.
Creator! therefore, and Destroyer, too! —
Yet, if thou art that inspiration whence
Life cometh to abiding, as that cause
By whose self-operation wins the soul
Its best annihilation, were my soul
Aught else than thou? Thy power, beyond ourselves?
I feel thee for my substance; sense my frame
Eterne by mine acknowledgment of thee!

LOVE POEMS

THE SIVAITES

I

NO life abides save still to be destroy'd.
Annihilation only shall endure —
The universal, godly and supreme.
Though may the soul seem fair, the gods but kind,
Tendeth the soul unto the void, the gods
Harbor an ill-intention : till in time
Is time fulfill'd and death is God alone.
Thou, didst thou seem so sheltering, did thy speech
Suffer interpretation of good-will,
That life seem'd of itself an holiness
God-like enduring in the name of thee ?
And art thou That which endeth everything ?

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

II

SO be it. In the godliness of thee
Informing still with splendor him I am,
Am I the Universal and my death
Nought but a reproduction lest the spirit
Be stagnate with entirety of truth.
If thou destroyest must thou too create
And thus alone preserve in endless life
The heart that is thy substance. Whence thy
power,
Destroying utterly all faith and hope
Within me, shall ennoble hope and faith
Unendingly to every moment's surge
Within me of thy re-creativeness.

LOVE POEMS

THE YOGIS

I

WHOSO may still desire of the world
Fair intercourse, who findeth his delight
In earth's activity and shares with earth
The rumor and wonder of all changing things,
Is not as these who mortify their hope
And make denial with their daily breath.
Have they some subtler hope, yet some delight
Of hush'd appreciation cheating still
The pretext of indifference and death?
Are they as I desireless yet moved
With adoration? It might be — for I
Have died unto the world, who live for thee!

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

II

WHY sit they though so utterly unmann'd,
Inaction'd, and they have thee at the heart?
Know I not adoration, and therethrough
Am passionately moved, mightily moving
In mine appreciation thy sweet world
Of splendor, fit for service of the soul?
They have not thee at heart, they are not fill'd
With worship which requireth every hour
The fresh thanksgiving, the unending prayer
By enterprise divinely dedicate.
These have no secret of salvation; these
Are dead to the world, because they know not thee.

LOVE POEMS

THE SUTTEES

I

YET it is plausible that there hath been
Some death in heaven, and thy heaven-in-earth
Is widow'd of its lord and calleth as
A thing forsaken on who will not hear.
This wrestling of the spirit with such truths
As thou vouchsafest (strange, bewildering
By misresponse unto the spirit's need!),
This outcast wandering without the pale
Of any place made paradise by thee,
This spirit-ruinous mystery but bears
One lesson at the last : / knew not thee ;
And best were nought before aught else I know.

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

II

FOR, failing thee — if failure be between
In any guise, as thou alone canst say ? —
For, failing thee, are these things in their right
Delusions real, typic monstrosities
Of faith, to overthrow all sanity.
Without thy pure evangel must the world
Perish from sanctity and virtue feel
No warrant in its dark idolatry.
The sword and scourge of God, the carrion crew
Of offal-feeders were a fairer faith
Than aught self-born to widow'd India.
Without thy heaven hath earth no pilgrim-place.

LOVE POEMS

THE DEVOTEES

I

MY pilgrimage forsooth hath not been long :
Only a life-time from that birth in thee
Till now an end as here I lay me down
By Ganga and shall pass upon his stream.
The bitterness of dust hath pass'd away
Before me, and upon the holy ghats
My spicèd woods and incense stand prepared.
May the fierce furnace of the spirit be swift
And firmly fatal ; and so inmosty
May all be ashen that the scarce-scorch'd wave
Shall cleanly cover the polluted place
Of death and wash earth of the last footfall.

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

II

MY soul hath many ways perplex'd herself
With these monstrosities of dream within
Her sphere of pilgrimage ; and many ways
Hath dream'd unto herself an holier truth
Of thee and of thy ministry through each
Dismay and each delusion : but none else
Bringeth conviction than this dream at last
Of uttermost purgation as by flame
And streams of Himavat. Here life and creed
Are one, here hope and truth indifferently
Devote self to thy service. Shalt thou say :
“ Ay, offer thee to death : and find thy peace ” ?

LOVE POEMS

THE UNBELIEVERS

I

NAY, but is not mine heart even as this heart
Of India which, failing to awake
To ways of resurrection, calleth as
That "thing forsaken" on its dream of thee ?
Can any death be cure where only faith
Cureth the spirit—and that faith were dead
Even with the common perishing of clay ?
Lo ! from these sands where Ganga in the sea
Perisheth, one last prayer ascendeth ; one
Need of thy love's enlightenment allow'd
Prevents the degradation, still precludes
Peace by the desperate soul-sacrifice.

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

II

THE Oriental Mystery remains
Within me of this nescience of thee :
Of nothingness, annihilation still
If by the burning-ghat : whilst yet the spirit
Refuseth action, will not self-destroy
The dreamer ; but abideth as inane,
Unmann'd, unnerved, contemplator of nought.
Not from the East, the Void, shall any peace
Of insight be achieved ; nor doth in me
Thy strength suffice to reconstruct a truth
Efficiently demonstrative of thee. —
The purpose of my pilgrimage hath fail'd.

LOVE POEMS

THE DISCIPLE

I

AND yet that hope which goeth to defeat
Achieveth satisfaction : scarce in my
Will, but in thy will by whose breath I am.
How might that proselyting in my soul
Succeed where inspiration gropes at fault
Requiring fresh search at thy perfect fount
Of revelation : that I understand ?
Shall not this lifting of the face to thee
As to a new evangel earn at last
The comprehension by the hearkening,
The service by the waiting patiently
Unto the Pentecostal gift of speech ?

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

II

'T IS thus that, front to front with falsity,
We learn some lack of final faith within.
Perceiving earth but dream, we find our dream,
That seem'd erstwhile a wakening, but sleep
Still, unempower'd through the living world. —
Still Eastward ! finding, in the want of thee
World-wide amid these unregenerate,
The trial and the pathway, present proof
Vouchsafed of thy salvation through the years.
Not, not the god. But still the God-born word
Engirdling earth to tell earth of His name ;
That earth, mine earth, may know thee : and be
whole !

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